

AGENDA ITEM: Library of California Reference Program**BACKGROUND:**

The CLSA State Reference Centers program has never been funded by the state. That program and services are described in Education Code Sections 18760-18764, and the similar (though not identical) LoC services are described in Education Code Section 18853(a).

The CLSA State Reference Centers Program provides for the establishment of two or more statewide reference centers which provide statewide service. It also specifies that one or more of the state reference centers be designated as a "...repository for collections specially relevant to economically disadvantaged and non English-speaking persons."

The LoC program element calls for "access to specialized information expertise and resources statewide to answer information requests generated by its primary clientele that are beyond the capacity or capability of a member institution or public library jurisdiction and its regional library network." It also indicates that "Provision shall be made for information formats specially relevant to culturally diverse populations and persons with disabilities."

As planning for the LoC Reference program begins, the concepts of the unfunded CLSA Reference Centers program are being considered under that broader planning effort in an attempt to frame a cohesive, complete statewide reference services program that would serve Californians through libraries of all types and not continue design of programs fragmented by type of library. The name change of this agenda item, from State Reference Centers to LoC Reference Programs reflects this new broader emphasis.

CURRENT STATUS: In accordance with Board direction, the 2001/2002 budget request for Library of California funding did not include any element specifically for the statewide reference components of the Act, pending staff and Board work on further defining those components.

Work does continue, using LSTA funds, to test and refine potential LoC reference services components, as described below.

FIRST SOURCE:

An LSTA grant for 2000/2001 was funded effective October 1, 2000 to continue testing and refinement of this statewide reference services component through the Los Angeles Public Library, which provides access to 200-plus online databases to all CLSA System Reference Centers and, this year, to six individual rural libraries. The added rural library component is intended to further test the viability of this centralized method of providing access to a broad range of databases, along with materials delivery, and an extensive technical assistance element. It is conceivable that this program element could be expanded, with the concurrence of the Los Angeles Public Library to directly serve other, non-public libraries in the state, if this

initial test proves successful. Staff will provide the board reports on the progress of the various test elements of this project as they proceed.

VIRTUAL ETHNIC RESOURCE CENTER (VERC)

As described to the Board in detail earlier, the VERC has been mounted on a web site at www.verc.org. It is expected that, if found useful by a large number of libraries, this program could become a part of the Board's efforts to better serve the underserved.

This, currently, is funded with private funds through March 31, 2001. The State Library is considering use of LSTA funding to expand this demonstration project and extend its funding beyond March 31, 2001 so that it can continue to develop while Board and staff formally consider the basic components and timing for the LoC Reference Program.

REVIEW OF LOC REFERENCE PROGRAM

It was proposed at the August 2000 Board meeting that a formal review of the statewide reference components of these programs be undertaken to provide the Board with recommendations for the future, overall design of them. This review is still in the planning stages and will not show real progress until the Library Programs Consultant position charged with reference and resource libraries program development is hired.

RELATED ISSUES TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD IN THE FUTURE:

1. Consider report of recommendations on alternative implementations of state reference services under the Library of California Act.
2. Review results of studies and projects now underway, including the pilot project involving System Reference Centers and rural library access to First Source services, the Virtual Ethnic Resource Center, and the Consumer Health Information Service program in Riverside.

Relevant Committee: Access Services
Staff Liaison: Liz Gibson